WHAT THE SMALL TOWN NEEDS

Clarence W. Wagener

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By

CLARENCE W. WAGENER

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PREFACE

There are several angles from which the reader may approach this inquiry into the more important needs of the American small town. If he is seeking amusement he may as well close the book at the start. Should he be obsessed with the idea that the small town is the jumping-off place to nowhere, the treatise will seem a veritable Sahara minus so much as a single oasis. But if the approach be made from any other point of view, regardless of his knowledge of or admiration for the small town or lack of these, the reader, so the author feels, can count in advance upon his time being profitably spent in a careful perusal of this work.

Particularly, the inquiry is intended to serve as an idea arouser and source of basic information for those who have the varied interests of the small town at heart. It is criticism made in the spirit of helpfulness

and arising from a kindly regard for the community of quite limited population. It is an attempt to do for the average small town what the author, with more or less success, did for a specific community of the same class a few years ago.

During years of first-hand contact with small towns in various sections of the country, it has been observed by the author that a greater number of small town citizens are concerned about civic progress than is generally supposed. The trouble, it seems, is that both leadership and a practical analysis of the needs of the small town have been lacking. This inquiry, it is hoped, will contribute to the fulfillment of the latter lack, which in turn should aid in the development of the much-needed leadership.

C. W. W.

Baltimore, August, 1924.

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WHAT THE SMALL TOWN NEEDS

I

WHITHER DRIFTS THE SMALL TOWN?

"Merrily we roll along, roll along, roll along,
Merrily we roll along, over the dark blue sea."

SHOULD the small towns of this fair land ever hold a national convention for the discussion of their problems in common, the singing of the familiar old song entitled "Good-Night, Ladies" would serve most appropriately as the opening number of the program. "Roll along" is right; and "over the dark blue sea" of general indifference toward the solution of many a weighty community problem.

But since there is little likelihood of such a convention being staged for some years to come—a convention which, if properly conducted, would be of far-reaching value to the Nation—that is no reason for encouraging any longer the present tendency to minimize

or ignore problems peculiar to the small town. To rate these problems as trivial is to overlook the ever-increasing interdependence of city, small town and country.

Here, it may be well to ask what is understood by the term "small town." Obviously, a town somewhat smaller than a city. But how much smaller? And how many inhabitants must a place boast to be ranked as a city? No strict definition of the small town can be given, it seems. The man who has spent all of his life in country districts is apt to think of a place of 6,000 to 8,000 souls as something more than a small town. A citizen of any of the largest cities will likely dub as "small" a town of 25,000 inhabitants. It all depends upon the viewpoint of the definer.

The small town this inquiry is to concern itself with ranges in size anywhere between the village stage and a population of, say, 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants. It is the town where the majority of its citizens know one

another by sight at least, where the atmosphere and influence of the surrounding rural territory are always to be reckoned with, and where a walk of five or ten minutes in any direction from the central point will carry one to the corporate limits or beyond.

According to the Federal Census of 1920, there were in the United States that year 14,946 incorporated towns with a population of less than 10,000. The inhabitants of these towns numbered upward of 18,000,000. So, it is seen that a very sizable portion of America's citizenry consists of "small towners," as contrasted with farmers or country dwellers on the one hand, and those who live in the larger cities on the other. Surely, there is none, therefore, who denies the importance of those problems more or less common to small towns throughout the land.

For the city reader it may be well to remark parenthetically that what follows has to do with matters of vital interest to

Americans, regardless of where they live. Anyone, even though but slightly familiar with the manner in which retail business must be conducted in rural districts, knows how indispensable the small town is, how it serves as an exceedingly convenient trading post for the manufacturer and jobber of the big city and the rural consumer, and how, indirectly, the small town's welfare affects the big city.

Then, too, there are in every large city many thousands who at some time in the past lived in a small town and who today, even though disclaiming the least trace of rusticity, have a kindly regard for the little home community of yore. City dwellers of this class wish the small town well and long ago grew tired of the pandemic fun-poking it has had to stand up under with increasing difficulty from year to year for the past few decades.

Clever jokes about the small town and its provincial ways are "pulled" every day. And

what fun these wise cracks afford! Why, even the small town man gets a hearty laugh out of some of them. To be sure, nobody objects seriously to such harmless jostling of the little municipalities and their propensity to tickle the risibilities of the Nation. Not so harmless, however, are some of the ironical portrayals of certain phases of small town life common to this generation in short story and novel form. Misconceptions that are sown broadcast by a cynicism that is essentially superficial but which professes to be penetrative sometimes work decided injury. It is fun-poking of this nature at which the small town rebels, and rightfully. For thereby the small town is given an untrue appearance, certain characteristics being magnified all out of proportion to their relative value and other more essential characteristics being, either purposely or through ignorance, misrepresented or left out of consideration altogether.

Perhaps the most common charge the

small town must answer is that it is narrow and hopeless. It may be narrow in certain ways. It may be somewhat short on suavity and "culture." It may be a bit late in getting around to the latest song hit. The American small town may have a good many things wrong with it and yet not merit one-tenth the ridicule and sarcastic bunk hurled in its general direction day after day, month after month, year after year.

In a sense, there is justification in saying that the small town is narrow. How could it be otherwise when it lacks material bigness on every hand? Life here, of necessity, must proceed on a small scale. The man-made marvels of the big city are not present to transport the individual largely away from self at every turn. There are no imposing skyscrapers; no famous museums or art galleries; no magnificent theaters to be pointed out with pride; infrequent chances to hear the best in music and lecture, and, as a rule, but few individuals who have traveled

widely and wisely and who are public-spirited and possessed of that rare good judgment which makes their counsel sought after and accepted.

But in the things of the spirit you can no more charge the small town with being narrow than you can the big city or the country district. Know the small town thoroughly and sympathetically and you need not be told that nowhere else is love for one's fellow-man developed in so practical and helpful a manner. It is in the small town that the poor and sore stricken are looked after most lovingly. It is in the small town that the most binding of friendships are formed, and there it is that the fundamentals of life can be experienced most satisfyingly. Again, in the small town unaffected sympathy reaches its highest level and religion gains its staunchest followers.

Is the small town hopeless? To a certain type of citizenry, yes. Where you find a man or woman who looks upon the big city's

splendors, multitudinous amusements and the very limit in bodily comforts as absolute everyday necessities and who would consider life scarcely worth living if deprived of these—there you have the individual to whom the small town and all that goes with it is anathema. Quite to the contrary, however, in the case of virile, thinking men and women. Whether or not they live in small towns, they know that all the good things in life and all future promise have not been corralled by the big city and the country district. Put your finger on a person possessed of even a spark of that pioneering fire which is at the bottom of our greatness as a Nation and you will invariably find admiration for the small town and at least a cursory understanding of its major problems.

To see a small town day after day fighting against the heavy odds now imposed upon it by the alluring appeals of the big city to its young manhood and womanhood; to witness the devotion of a few local big-souled men

and women laboring for its most crying needs all but unnoticed, noble citizens patiently striving year after year to get things accomplished and to convert to a broader point of view that ultra-conservative "critter" yet so greatly in the majority in nearly every small town—this is to see that beneath all the surface blemishes there is something glorious in the meanest small town.

But, to digress somewhat, is not the big city responsible in very large measure for the present status of the small town? Each decade the census report gives official confirmation to the common observation that our population is tending more and more to crowd into the great marts of trade. This is just another way of saying that our small towns are being drained more and more thoroughly each year of their brightest and most ambitious young men and women—potential leaders that can ill afford to be lost to the small town—for the appeasement of

the big city's insatiable appetite for fresh, young blood, which of itself it cannot furnish. This state of affairs exacts a perennial handicap of the small town and hinders it from attaining to anything like the standards it should be achieving in civic, business, social and moral development. Were but a sizable portion of its best-fitted and most worthy young people persuaded that it would redound to their ultimate welfare to devote their energies to the upbuilding of the small town, then within a comparatively brief span of time the majority of the problems of the small town now to be taken up in some detail would start solving themselves. But that's another story.

Granting that the small town, misunderstood and undervalued as it so often is, merits thorough analysis, then its outstanding needs press for consideration. These needs, and suggestions as to how they can best be met, are to be discussed under the following heads for the sake of convenience:

(a) Administrative and Public Welfare; (b) Business; (c) Educational and Religious Activities; (d) Social and Recreational Work.

II

SOME ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC WELFARE NEEDS

TO give consideration first to the more common administrative needs of the small town is fitting, because the administration is the sun about which all other municipal needs revolve and to which they must look for warmth and nurture. Where the local government is adapted to the town's requirements and is functioning satisfactorily, there you will find a town that is working out its own salvation. But far too seldom does the small town administration thus measure up to anything approximating its opportunities.

Municipal government in the United States can be divided roughly into two systems—the old one of checks and balances, and the more modern of coordination and

cooperation. Illustrative of the former is the councilmanic type, where the town's public affairs are in charge of a chief magistrate who is commonly designated the Mayor, and a legislative body known as the Council. Examples of the latter are the commission and the city manager forms (soon to be described at some length) with their centralization of authority and modern businesslike supervision of local administrative work.

During the greater part of the nineteenth century the checks and balances system, primarily concerned with safeguarding rather than promoting the people's interests, was in vogue. Then, it was supposed to protect the municipality against oppression and graft at the hands of unworthy officials. But, in general, it has been found ineffective, and what virtue this system may at one time have possessed as municipal guardian has been more than offset, for at least a genera-

tion back, by its increasing unwieldiness and paucity of accomplishments.

As far as the small town is concerned, the councilmanic form of municipal government functions on the false premise that good officials can, as a rule, be found and induced to serve the community for little or no compensation. Also, there is very little doubt that the principle of divided responsibility, which is part and parcel of this plan, was held to be very desirable. But latter-day evidence has shown that centralized authority (in municipal affairs as in business enterprises) is more fruitful of results and more economical of time and money.

When the administrative needs of the small town were meager as compared with those of today and when such a multitude of conflicting interests were not met with on every hand, there was a much better chance of making the checks and balances system function with some degree of merit. But such is no longer the case. Rare is the ex-

ception nowadays, especially in the small town, to—"What you don't pay for you needn't expect to get." It should never have been expected that a town's affairs would fare very encouragingly when placed, for the large part, in the hands of council committees, with the ensuing minimization of the individual responsibility of each official. Small wonder, then, that the councilmanic type of municipal government has so little to show in constructive service.

In contrast to the councilmanic type of municipal government is that known as the commission form, which, when sifted down to essentials, is found to consist of a body of officials with legislative and executive powers combined. While in the original commission plan but five members were called for, this number has been raised in many cases, but always a small legislative-executive council has featured this form. Electing officials to specific duties and then for the voters to hold them directly responsible is

another important characteristic of the commission plan. Usually with this type of municipal government the people's interests are safeguarded by the concurrent adoption of the initiative, the referendum and the recall.

One of the more serious weaknesses of the commission form is that each commissioner is given entire charge of a particular department, which makes for divided municipal authority. Another defect is the electing of commissioners by common suffrage, regardless of the fact that certain of the commissioners need to be chosen on the ground of special knowledge and skill for the proper execution of their work. A candidate's popularity with the voters, in itself, is no endorsement for an office which calls for expert technical knowledge.

Because of these and other weaknesses in the commission plan, it has been largely superseded by the city manager or the commission manager plan. The city manager plan con-

sists of an elective council and an executive head known as the city manager, who is appointed by the council, gives all his time to the supervision of municipal work and who is held strictly to account by the council. The commission manager plan calls for the election of a certain number of commissioners who in turn choose an expert to take over the actual management of the administrative work. This latter plan combines the best elements of the commission and the city manager plans and is declared by a growing number of communities to be the most practical and effective yet devised for the government of an American municipality, large or small.

Except in the very small towns—places that are but a step removed from the village class and possessed of, say, less than a thousand souls—the intrinsic worth and workableness of the more modern system of municipal government based on coordination and cooperation recommend it as the preferred

method. Rarely, may be found a town of several thousand inhabitants, or even a small city, where an unusual combination of local conditions recommends the old checks and balances system, but such cases are so seldom met with that, for all practical purposes, they may be regarded as the exceptions which prove the rule. How rapidly the modern system is supplanting the old is shown in a report read at the convention of the City Managers' Association held in 1923, which made the claim that in a period of three years the number of cities and towns to adopt the city manager plan had doubled.

But before proceeding further let it be stated that the mere act of adopting the city or commission manager form of municipal government does not mean that everything administrative will henceforth be lovely. The success of either of these plans will depend largely upon the choosing of the right kind of manager. This, however, is not to sound a note of pessimism. Capable executives are

found to fill responsible positions in a great variety of business enterprises. Men well fitted to assume the duties of city or commission managership are to be had, too, provided they are sought intelligently and provided the salary offered is in keeping with the responsibility exacted.

Whether to select a local man or whether an outsider is preferable for this position is something that the individual community must determine for itself. In a great many instances, however, it is clearly a mistake to settle upon a local applicant. No matter how capable he may be, the town manager who has been elevated to the office over his fellow-townsmen is not apt to receive proper credit for good work done, and it is likely that he will be taunted unduly for any minor deficiencies. Another mistake frequently made is that of rating engineering training and experience as the prime qualifications for successful managership of a town, whereas

there are several other requisites equally important, as will soon be pointed out.

The American small town needs to awake to its fundamental requirement of a businesslike administration of public affairs. When such an awakening does take place there stands ready for adoption a system of local government based on tried business principles and which sees to it that the responsibility of municipal management is centralized, with the active head devoting all his time to the town's interests. The city manager or the commission manager plan (in general, the former for the smaller places and the latter for the larger) makes for a solid foundation on which the community can build substantially year by year and eventually find itself possessed of a model civic structure.

One of the most attractive features of the city and commission manager plans is that the city manager, as the executive head is termed in each plan, is paid for full-time

services and is expected to take the whole town and all its public interests under his wing, as it were. What a city manager can do for a small town is limited, of course, by his native ability, his training and experience and by the financial and moral support accorded him, but even though these are not outstandingly in evidence, a capable city manager with a true love of the municipality at heart finds constructive work on every hand calling for guidance and common-sense handling.

Your wide-awake, efficient town manager is, by the very nature of his job, an exceedingly busy man—and an exceedingly valuable man to the community which he serves. First of all, he sees to it that the finances of the town are functioning properly, with suitable provisions made for the more probable contingencies of the future. He advocates the placing of the tax rate at the figures that will provide what is necessary for the maintenance and reasonable progress of the

community, but he is as intolerant of raising or maintaining the tax rate above those figures as is the most close-fisted old farmer who has moved to town to pass the remainder of his days on Easy Street.

This energetic manager of the municipality's various affairs never waits upon the bidding of the local citizenry to enlarge upon his official duties, but is ever finding for himself new ways in which he may serve the community. He endeavors to study the citizens' interests in the broadest way, not hesitating at times to advocate changes which must be put into operation before the average man or woman can see the accruing benefits. He is anything but supercilious in his conduct toward and regard for those whom he has been chosen to serve, and he constantly strives to establish among the citizenry the greatest possible good-will toward their community. To that end he is an advocate of frank publicity relative to the town's affairs, believing as he does that the

man or the woman who pays the taxes is the ultimate boss and has a right to and should be given correct and uncensored information, and this as promptly as it becomes available. He prefers that the citizens get the facts straight, from the official source rather than through rumor, and he is not one of those "boosters" who shiver in their boots for the town's welfare the minute something a little adverse is admitted in black and white. He does not hold the egotistical opinion that the whole world is watching his town and will shun it forever after should, for example, the fact become publicly known that the water rate must be raised fifty per cent., or that the town has the poorest streets of any municipality in its section of the state.

One of the prime needs of most small towns is an arrangement whereby the citizens can pour out their complaints against the municipality in the assurance that they will be answered. Bottle up the grievances of

the folks in a small town and you dull their interest in public affairs. In the small place governed by the old checks and balances system a complaint rarely ever receives a courteous reception, and more rarely still is it given considerate attention. Opportunities for "passing the buck" were never more numerously present anywhere than they are where the councilmanic type of municipal government is in the saddle. With such a system it is no one person's business to keep the citizenry "sold" on their town. As a natural consequence the person who dares complain, except where the provocation is patently extreme, is looked upon askance. Little wonder, then, it is that the citizens of the average small town show such scant interest in the community's affairs. Too long have they been given to understand that "boosting, eternal boosting" is what is asked, wanted of them; aye, all that will be tolerated.

Upon divers occasions the small town man is reminded that the municipal authorities and the business interests in general want none of his discouraging complaints. He sees that with the great majority of his fellow-citizens it is "boost, boost" all the time, and that in this circumvented world there is no place for the constructive critic, the individual who is not afraid to call his soul his own and who dares at every turn to stand up for needed improvement. In the small town, as a rule, a complaint is *persona non grata*.

To remedy this unhealthy state of affairs, the city manager who is really on the job broadcasts at the beginning of his term of office a notice to the effect that the latch-string to his office door is on the outside and will remain there. He takes the stand that when a complaint is to be made it should come to headquarters. And then he does not let the complaint pine away, finally to be interred for good in the office files. Each com-

plaint is received courteously and in a few days the complainant receives an answer. Thus John Doe, citizen, is encouraged to lay bare his grievances, and as he and Tom Brown and Bill Smith and many others trot in with their real or imagined injuries and have them "treated," they begin to take greater and greater interest in this rather unusual form of town government, and their conception of what the town can really become is vastly broadened.

Another conception prevalent in the majority of small towns—the assumption that defects in administration and what not will somehow be righted if left to time—is quickly and vigorously assailed by a capable town manager. He is cognizant of the insidious manner in which this false notion undermines progress and ofttimes brings a community to the brink of ruin. This alert leader and municipal knight-errant ever keeps a close lookout on the vital activities of the municipality. Constantly he presses for the cor-

rection of standing disorders and is always on guard for the outcropping of new untoward conditions. But where the council-manic system is in vogue, with all its scattering of responsibility, the leave-it-to-time method of attending to many a sore on the body municipal is much in favor.

One of the least appreciated assets of the small town and yet decidedly in the forefront of its vital institutions is the local newspaper. Where the town officials and the leading men and women take an interest in what the paper prints, there you will see a community awake to one of the surest ways of promoting varied worth-while activities. In many, many a small town the administration not only fails to encourage the local press in the dissemination of municipal news items, reports, etc., but does just about everything it can, short of actual suppression, to discourage the publication of a great deal of news which it is in a position to furnish correctly. The result is that the local papers publish much

hearsay and piecemeal news, and the citizens of the community, whether they realize it or not, are the losers. A town manager who is really striving for community advancement will do all he can to bring the citizenry to a full appreciation of what properly supported newspapers can mean to a town. He will advocate public discussion of all vital questions in the columns of the local press and will welcome editorial suggestions dealing with any and every phase of the town's affairs.

The provincial atmosphere that has hung over the average small town since its inception, it would be exceedingly difficult to dispel. So methodically go the general run of its citizens about their daily tasks and so infrequently are they given a jarring loose from their native habitat that, to even the closest observer, they appear to be little if at all concerned over the impression their town makes upon outsiders. But the small town goes right along day after day leaving a very concrete impression upon all visitors

and newcomers. The impression may be good or bad, but it never fails to register. Sometimes a long list of advantages is outweighed by one drawback. The community may be blessed with well-nigh everything but good streets, for instance, and yet be placed in the category of the undesirable by practically every visitor. Or it may be that a good hotel is lacking, in which case one can count upon it that the reports which the traveling salesmen are spreading are not of the helpful sort. Whatever lowers the small town in the estimation of the outsider deserves special consideration at the hands of those in authority, for towns no more exist to themselves than do individuals, and no town is so well off that it can afford to let the outsider's opinion go hang. Here again the town or commission manager plan of municipal government is better calculated to cope with a vital problem. The old checks and balances system lets a task of this sort go begging, whereas the town manager has no occasion

or opportunity to "pass the buck," and therefore he points out wherein the defects lie and what is required to set right the untoward conditions.

This business of running a small town, even when reduced to its simplest terms, involves a great deal of headwork and initiative. What served fairly well a generation back should not be expected to serve at all under the greatly changed conditions met with today, and yet many a small town is endeavoring to care for its municipal affairs just as it was wont to do in the days when the high-wheeled bicycle was frightening horses far and near. Nowadays the administrative duties in all small towns are manifold, embracing as they do the management of public utilities, the streets, the safeguarding of the public health, police and fire protection, etc. Not only must the daily routine be planned and the monthly and annual expenses met, but the town's future needs must be considered. For example, power plant machinery

used in the production of electric current has an estimated life of eight to ten years. It is the duty of the community's governing body to take such a cold fact as this into account and to provide a sinking fund for the eventual replacement of this machinery. Or in the matter of improved streets, a good roadway may be built this year, but it will not continue long as a good one if it is not looked after at regular intervals.

In such an important matter as the public health there is room for much improvement in the average small town. Not that already there are not enough ordinances on the statute books, but rather that there is too scant an appreciation of how greatly the happiness and prosperity of a community depend upon uniform observance of all sanitary measures. It seems queer, doesn't it, that even today the milk supply of many a small town is of most questionable quality, while high-grade milk from that very neighborhood is going into a near-by city, where

exacting requirements must be met? Again, when a communicable disease breaks out and begins to spread rapidly those in authority are apt to urge suppression of news concerning it. As likely as not, prominent citizens, sometimes the town officials, too, will call upon the local press and practically demand that no mention be made of the bad news. Such action on the part of any citizen or official should be discountenanced; and the correction of such an erroneous conception of community service is something worthy of the attention of civic workers in a great many small towns. Then, too few of the citizens in small municipalities are thoroughly familiar with the underlying causes for most illness, and they are not sufficiently well posted on the basic laws which make for good health. A series of non-technical health articles by the local health officer, appearing year in and year out in the local papers, is a crying need of practically every small town in America.

Annual medical inspection of all school children is a service of incalculable value to the future citizenry of the small town. Where the local school board does not require this, the town officials, school patrons' associations —everybody—should, in the interests of the community at large, work for medical inspection of all school children each year. The average small town is anything but fastidious in this matter where foresight is so all important, for in those towns where such examinations are made regularly the great majority of the school children show physical defects. Fortunately, the greater number of these defects can be corrected satisfactorily if detected and treated while in the early stages. To provide medical inspection of the school children each year is to render them a service of great and lasting benefit.

These that have been discussed are some of the many things in administration and public welfare that the small town needs. It needs, first of all, the proper form of munici-

pal government, a form based on the modern demand for coordination and cooperation. It needs the right type of officials, particularly an energetic, broad-minded and capable individual at the helm. And then it needs a responsiveness and wide-awakeness on the part of its citizens that will assist the administration in its efforts to make the town a better and happier place in which to live.

III

SOME BUSINESS NEEDS OF THE SMALL TOWN

EVERY small town is founded upon the bedrock of business. It may not be built upon very good rock, but the foundation, good or bad, is business. Were it not for its business interests, the municipality would disintegrate with great rapidity. The only exception to this is where the town is purely or largely residential and suburban to a good-sized city, in which case the existence of the former is dependent upon the business of the latter. The vitally important part played by business in every municipality must be patent to all, but it will bear emphasizing here preparatory to a discussion of some of the specific business needs of the small town.

As a town emerges from the village stage its business men are very reluctant to give up the almost altogether independent methods of doing business which they had felt it necessary to adopt when the town was so small as not to be incorporated. A near-by municipality may be drawing away a good portion of the trade a town should be getting, or hundreds of dollars may be going out of the trading area every month to big mail order houses, and yet the local merchants will not be found making any appreciable effort to check this drainage. This is because each business establishment feels that it is there for itself almost exclusively, although the town may boast a so-called chamber of commerce with its annual boosters' banquet, and a retail merchants' association which fails to tackle even one-fourth of the work that falls within its province. Small town citizens need to grasp fully, just once, what true cooperative activity on the part of the business interests can accomplish. To do so

would be to usher in a period of healthy business growth for the small town such as it has never experienced.

Mention has just been made of two cooperative organizations generally met with in small towns of around 2,000 to 3,000 population and up—the chamber of commerce and the retail merchants' association. These, together with such business clubs as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Civitan, etc., are afforded many opportunities to be of appreciable assistance in promoting the general as well as the business welfare of the small town. What these organizations accomplish depends upon how strongly they are imbued with the spirit of constructive service, as contrasted with the emphasis placed by these clubs in some places on the social-advantage and the business-investment phases of an active membership.

In the cases of the chamber of commerce and the retail merchants' association, the importance of selecting a real secretary can-

not be overemphasized. Even where a town boasts but 1,000 or 1,500 inhabitants it can make good use of a full-time paid secretary for its chamber of commerce (or board of trade, if you prefer to have it designated that way). And do you question how the salary for such a secretary could be raised in these very small towns? Here's the answer: If the town has as many as forty business establishments, all told (and few are the small towns of 1,500 or more population which have not only this number but more), and each of these business places were to contribute on an average of but $5 a month there would be available in a year's time a total of $2,400—sufficient to secure an $1,800 or $2,000 secretary and leave about enough for his official expenses. But were each of these establishments to contribute $1 more each month there would be a total of $2,880 paid in for the twelvemonth's gross expenses, justifying the employment of a secretary capable of commanding a salary some-

what over $2,000. And this $5 or $6 a month as dues to the local chamber of commerce would represent just about the wisest investment that the small town business man could make, and the plan would not work a hardship upon any financially, save possibly the very smallest. But since it would be advisable to scale the individual apportionment to the amount of business done, the smallest houses would likely get off with a levy of around $2.50 or $3.00 a month.

What the small town without a paid secretary for its chamber of commerce needs to see is the urgency of awakening to the great handicap it is imposing upon itself, in business and many other ways. If a chamber of commerce without a full-time paid secretary can ofttimes accomplish good for a community, how much more effectively can one with a secretary who devotes his entire working day to the advancement of the town commercially give a good account of itself at the end of the year! Just as the small

town needs the municipal authority centered in some capable individual, so it needs the cooperative business promotion managed by one who is making this work his sole job.

Every one of the general business needs of the small town (more are to be taken up shortly) calls for special attention from some one whose business it is to attend to these needs. That is why the full-time paid secretary, if he be a capable individual, can be expected to justify his salary several times over each year. Often he can bring about savings for the various members of the chamber and suggest ways in which new business is to be obtained, so that even the most skeptical member becomes convinced that the secretary is worthy of his hire.

Occasionally the small town should take an accurate census of its industries and various other business establishments. In this way it can be learned whether the town really needs new enterprises of any sort. It may find out that in certain (if not nearly all)

lines it is already too abundantly cared for. For instance, the average small town of today is surfeited with groceries and meat markets and clothing stores. In lines such as these, where business is so badly cut up already, causing each dealer to exact a rather high percentage of profit in order to make anything, no encouragement should be given those contemplating the opening of new stores. The small town will one of these days awake to the serious drain made upon its resources by having to support two or three times as many business establishments as it really needs. This condition, however, is not peculiar to the small town; rather, it is to be met with in all trading centers today.

Have you ever heard of a small town that did not, at some stage of its existence, contract a trying case of "factoryitis"? It seems that none escapes this contagion. Some towns get off with a mild case, others are stricken quite severely; apparently, a good number never become completely cured

(witness the return of all the symptoms every few years in the case of many). The malady is easily diagnosed. Frantically, the patient begins to acclaim that all it needs to become a thriving, bustling city, with a wonderful future ahead, is FACTORIES. Day in and day out the talk is of how desirable factories are to a community; how factories will add to local wealth and give profitable employment to every son and daughter who wishes to earn his or her living by honest work. In fact, the never-failing earmark by which even the most crude novice can identify factoryitis is that in the first, last and all-between stages the victim talks incessantly but gets nowhere with all the expenditure of breath, for the simple reason that it is founded on little save wishes and hopes.

But how much better it is to look first into the basic facts. Consider the town's location, geographically and as regards the big markets and good transportation facilities; its proximity to sources of raw materials; the

local supply of labor; the type or types of industry predominant in that section, and the attitude of the citizens, particularly the business men, toward the welfare and true advancement of the community. Things such as these should stand to the forefront when trying to determine along what lines the town can rightfully hope to grow. To advocate growth of a type not encouraged by a careful scrutiny of such basic facts is but to ignore the painful experience of thousands of "boom" towns which eventually fell flat because they strove (and in many cases with great earnestness) to reach goals which they, on second thought, should have seen were impossible of attainment.

A thorough analysis of a small municipality may show that the town is typically an agricultural trading center and has but few inducements to offer manufacturers. Yet its citizens may be yelling themselves hoarse with the united cry, "Factories, factories!" Or take another case. The town may be pre-

eminently a residential town for commuters who work in a near-by city, and yet the real estate interests may be endeavoring to bring in factories, the location of which in that particular community would be most ill-advised from every point of view.

The small town, just as with the individual citizen, needs to recognize its limitations as well as evaluate its possibilities. It is very commendable in a small town to set an ambitious goal for itself, but it is aught else than commendable for it to set that goal without regard to conditions as they obtain —at present and in honest prospect. The small town that values itself highly but with common-sense honesty already has its feet firmly planted upon the path leading to its highest destiny.

Then, too, nearly every small town is laboring under the conviction that a substantial annual growth in population is just about the most desirable thing that could happen. The urge of the big cities to outstrip one

another in number of inhabitants rather than excel in ability to care for their present citizens is a fault just as prevalent, in a diminutive way, with the small towns. When will alert, industrious Americans awake to the fact that mere growth in numbers signifies little or nothing of which to be proud? When will they, rather, take greatest delight in that growth which makes a small town, a city, a state and a nation a better place in which to live and to rear children? Many a small town would be far better off if it had a few hundred less people residing within its limits, because of the rather inadequate facilities it affords. On the other hand, there are small towns which could just as well be somewhat larger, their facilities for caring for the citizenry being more than adequate for their present populations. The small town will be better off when it recognizes that increasing its population is rarely ever its chief problem. And when the population begins to increase the municipality

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should seriously concern itself with ways and means of taking care of the increase satisfactorily.

The point just made is best elucidated by noting what happens when a big city leaps ahead rather rapidly in population. Paralleling the incoming of hundreds of new families to various sections of the city and outskirts, there springs up a greatly increased demand for water, gas, electricity, sewerage, paved streets, street car and bus service, public parks, libraries, fire and police protection, churches, mail delivery and collection. Though on a much smaller and not quite so varied a scale, the same thing happens in the small town when any appreciable augmentation of its citizenry is registered within a short space of time. And just as the big city gains little or nothing in the end if it fails to absorb and properly care for its newcomers, so the small town should be sure that it will be able to provide for the greater volume and variety of the needs of

a larger community before it bids for or even so much as encourages growth of population.

One of the chief complaints emanating from the business establishments of the small town is that a great deal of local money is being spent with out-of-town concerns—mail order houses in distant cities, and department stores and specialty shops in big cities not so distant. Scarcely any remark current to small town business circles is more bromidic than, "When he (referring to a fellow-citizen) has the cash he buys of a mail order house, but when he is hard up then he comes to the local store for credit," or words of similar import. And there is no gainsaying the fact that thousands of dollars do leave the average small town and contiguous territory every year, which money helps build up far-off communities but contributes not in the least to the upbuilding of the home locality. Now there has a great deal been written and a great deal more spoken on the whys and wherefores of this

state of affairs, but the essence of the matter seems to be just this:

People can be counted upon to buy where they are convinced it is to their interests to buy. Once show a man wherein he actually contributes to his own welfare when he buys at home and thereafter he will patronize local business places regularly. Obviously, then, the way to get more and more people to spend their money with home concerns is to show them clearly and specifically how the individual actually benefits himself practically every time he buys of a local dealer. But you may ask, "Is it possible to do this? Isn't a man or woman going to buy where prices are lowest?"

Despite assurances to the contrary from many a small town merchant, the task of winning over customers from mail order houses and department stores of near-by cities is by no means impossible of accomplishment. But the job is one that requires more thoughtful and thorough handling than

is usually accorded it. You must present arguments that are both sound and interesting from the customer's point of view, and they must be arguments that deal primarily with the various benefits enjoyed by the individual as an individual when he spends his money with the local dealers. Singly and collectively, the business interests of the small town should go about solving this common and worrisome problem along some such lines as follow:

It is a rather sad commentary to make upon human nature, but nevertheless it is true, that people in the great majority—in country, small town and city—buy where they please without giving consideration to the more or less unselfish reasons that may be advanced as to why they should be patronizing home business establishments. This being the case, it is but a waste of time and expense to try to convert customers of mail order houses and department stores of nearby cities to spending their money at home

by telling them how much better it would be for the local community. The drive must be made along different lines. The appeal must touch the average consumer intimately. After all, what is wanted is to keep the money in the home territory, and the arguments which will do this, so long as they be soundly based, are the arguments to employ.

If the small town business interests would but make the best of the advantages they can offer consumers over and above the slightly lower prices at which the mail order houses claim to sell merchandise, then the widespread habit of sending money out of the community for retail purchases would be, in a large measure, checked. But consider first this matter of price. There is no disputing the fact that considerable merchandise can be bought at a slight monetary saving when ordered from one of the big corporations catering to the mail order trade. Yet the actual saving in money is ofttimes much less than the catalog prices would lead

one to expect. To buy goods of a local store takes but a minimum of one's time and, as a usual thing, the initial cost is the only cost. On the other hand, to the catalog price of your mail order house article one must, as a general rule, add the transportation charges, also take into consideration how long a time he must await the arrival of goods ordered from a distant point. Very often, however, quality and quantity considered, the average price for the various commodities purchased in a year's time will not be found to be noticeably lower for the regular patron of out-of-town houses. And the consumer needs to have this average-price-over-a-year idea stressed to him, for, if this is not actually pointed out, he is unlikely to think of the reputed savings enjoyed by the customer of mail order houses in this light of a twelve-month average.

Yet, let it be agreed, for the sake of argument if nothing else, that the average laid-down price of goods purchased from mail

order houses is quite a bit lower than the at-home price. Does this mean that the cake is all dough with the small town business man? By no means. In fact, the price argument is plainly but one of several. Where, then, do the big establishments at a distance stand when other considerations are taken up?

Being able to inspect articles in person before purchasing; to try on, for example, a pair of shoes or a suit of clothing before deciding to buy; to satisfy oneself as to quality and style; to get what is wanted without delay; to obtain quick adjustments on such purchases as prove unsatisfactory—here are some of the things enjoyed by the deal-at-homes, important phases of the service rendered by the small town dealer which no mail patron of distant business establishments can hope to receive. And is there one who would make light of any of these advantages denied the mail order customer? Each phase of this distinct service has a value which be-

comes more and more appreciated as it is emphasized and utilized.

In no more effective manner can the small town business interests present their case for dealing at home than by pointing out, at frequent intervals, individually and as a group, how the local business establishments serve in ways denied to the mail order houses and others at a distance. The consumer who is not already a confirmed deal-at-home needs to be made to feel that he is missing advantages he should be enjoying—advantages which more than offset any savings gained by patronizing out-of-town concerns. And he has but to look around a little to see that to deal at home is no longer synonymous with accepting any old thing, thanks to the universal demand for the latest styles and models, which compels the small town merchant to carry up-to-date stocks. The patron who seeks something new can generally find it in a small town business establishment.

To gain and hold the confidence of con-

sumers it is up to each business man in the small town to practice as well as preach absolute square dealing and honesty in advertising. Nothing is of greater moment to the small town's business welfare than that its commercial establishments stand unimpeachable in the estimation of the trading public. To this end, the business interests as a whole should ever be on the alert, ready to denounce any intentional deception and to set aright without delay all misunderstandings. And such grievances as may arise against any business house of the community should be given an impartial hearing. The chamber of commerce or board of trade of the small town serves as it should serve only when it places a high value on the good-will of the individual consumer. The fruits of a vast amount of work done to encourage dealing at home can be destroyed completely by questionable dealings on the part of a local merchant, if such dealings are allowed to go unchallenged by fellow-business men.

Yet another factor of no small import to the business as well as general welfare of the small town is its transportation facilities. Is the passenger service—railway, bus or boat—what it should be for a town of its size and the amount of business transacted? Likewise, does the municipality enjoy the freight service to which it is rightly entitled? And what about the roads of the trading area, particularly those leading into the town; and the streets of the town? Every now and then the entire system of transportation facilities needs to be considered carefully. Such seemingly trifling matters as no drinking water being supplied at the passenger depot and the closing of the freight office an hour too early in the afternoon have been known to give very bad impressions of a town's relative standing, to say nothing of the daily inconvenience caused both visitors and citizens. Many a discouraging transportation situation can be bettered, once the local chamber of commerce

really interests itself in the matter. In many a municipality which is now the radiating point of a network of splendid roads and in possession of good streets, you will learn that the town did not come by these blessings without a concerted and sustained effort in behalf of such improvements on the part of the business interests. Always, it behooves the business men to take a keen interest in road improvement; to urge the building of good roads as rapidly as possible, and as fast as improved roads and streets are laid down to be equally as insistent that these public thoroughfares receive adequate repairing just as the need for such repairing develops. Then, too, for the chamber of commerce or other body of business men to see that suitable road markers are put up is to render the small town a service of no mean merit, particularly in these days of long-distance auto driving and consequently greatly extended trading areas.

Here, then, are some of the things the

small town should be striving for in the sphere of business: Full-fledged development of the spirit of cooperation for the good of each and all; recognition of the well-nigh invaluable services that a capable and adequately paid chamber of commerce secretary stands in a position to render the community and in what way the town can reasonably hope to grow; an understanding of how nonsensical it is for many a town to seek growth in population; a clearer conception of why so many people become customers of mail order houses and department stores in near-by cities instead of dealing with the home town merchant, and how this state of affairs can be remedied; to appreciate more fully the dollars and cents value of absolute honesty in both advertising and the business dealings, and the vitally important part the transportation facilities of the town and surrounding territory play in the town's welfare and advancement.

IV

WHAT IS LACKING EDUCATIONALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY?

EDUCATION and religion! How indebted is man's present civilized state to these two mighty forces! What hope for future progress could be held out were education and religion suddenly to be lifted from the face of the earth? Little need is there to stress how just about everything that is worth while in life—be it lived in city, town or on a farm—presupposes the enjoyment of educational and religious advantages. Most assuredly, there are no phases of small town life more deserving of consideration than these two.

How does the average small town stand educationally? Is it doing its level best for the advancement of learning among children and grown-ups, too? Is it showing other than

a superficial interest in education, and anxious that those who are desirous of adding to their store of knowledge may be afforded ample opportunity? Is its citizenry awake to the potential value of every educational institution in the community—cognizant wherein each excels and each is deficient?

Taking into consideration the limitations under which the small town school must function—inadequate financial support (in most every case) and the many handicaps incident thereto—the small town of today is getting just about as near maximum efficiency in elementary and high school instruction as it could reasonably expect. When the janitor of the school building receives higher wages than a number of the teachers who preside over classes therein; when every year many of the most proficient instructors in small town schools are abandoning the blackboard to take up office work in the big cities at much better salaries, there is nothing to

do but admit that the small town is placing too low a valuation upon the services of those to whom it commits the instruction of the young. Without doubt, the basic educational need of the small town is the providing of better salaries for teachers.

Yet a divergent thought presses for attention here. Shall the small town school, patterning as it does now after its big city sister, continue to add, year after year, new courses of instruction, with the inevitable requirement of more teachers and increases in equipment? Or is the day at hand when the small town school will decide it the better part of wisdom to offer fewer subjects, each taught by an adequately paid teacher who is eminently fitted for the work? But, after all, this is not the place to discuss the probable trend in the field of small town school administration, which is a subject worthy of an individual treatise. What has been set down does show, however, that better salaries—which can mean better teachers—

are possible for the same amount of money now expended, if fewer teachers are employed.

But money isn't all with the good teacher. Words of appreciation and encouragement secure a type of loyalty and pride in the daily work that the pay check can never procure. Let the taxpayers take a keen interest in the schools, concerning themselves with the manner in which the school appropriations are expended; and let the parents of school children, through active membership in patrons' leagues, show their interest in what is being done and throw off the cloak of reticence when encouragement for excellence of instruction is in order. Then the small town school—kindergarten, elementary and high—will grow in true usefulness to the community.

At the same time, it will not do to expect the impossible of the schools. They are not, as now run, calculated to make up for the basic deficiencies in home training to any

great extent. The prescribed system of instruction takes practically no account of the untoward conditions that obtain in many homes. The teacher must needs build upon the material the homes send her. She has not the time nor the training to specialize in correcting one type of lack in home discipline here, another there. To know the small town school intimately and the conditions under which it functions is to see that some of the objurgations leveled at it, and by those who should know better, are altogether unfair; certainly so as long as home conditions receive such meager thought.

To teach boys and girls how to live happily, with all that this signifies, should be the aim of the school. But the old pedagogical ideas, many worn threadbare, are yet in great favor. And flourishing, as never before, is the type of instruction that exalts the mercenary value of an education. How long will school patrons, trustees, officials, teachers and even the older pupils remain impervious

to the argument of common sense: That the curricula of the schools, particularly of the elementary grades, should be based on the most vital needs of today's citizenry and should prepare the pupil to live life fully, with far less consideration than is now given to the question of how to make a living! In addition to instruction in the old standbys, the three R's, which all schools are yet supposed to be teaching, the average small town school (and the city school, too) attempts instruction in many subjects which are not nearly so fundamentally conducive to the living of a complete life as are certain other subjects not now generally taught.

What constitutes an ideal curriculum for the elementary grades; what lists of subjects should be given first place in model junior and four-year high school courses, it is not in the province of this treatise to set forth. But every small town boy and girl, upon completion of the graded school, should have had some rudimentary instruction in the why of

law, how it came into existence, how it has grown and the scope of its function; community development, and how every citizen can help in the work and why; ethics as applied to everyday living, and the saving grace of good manners and uniform courtesy; the practice of tolerance; the necessity for and dignity of work and how it supplies its own satisfying reward; the place of worth-while amusements in a well-ordered life; the need for daily exercise and play, by grown-ups as well as by the young; basic health rules, including the fundamental facts of sex and social hygiene; the great enjoyment afforded by the best in literature (with due emphasis placed upon the value and charm of poetry), music, painting, sculpture and architecture; what "the brotherhood of man" really means; the treasures which await the lover of nature on this hand and that, showing how nature, in her myriad manifestations, unlocks the door to joys that cannot be subtracted from or stolen.

Consider, for a few moments, how your knowledge of some of these neglected subjects stands. If you have never studied the history of law what do you happen to know of its origin, growth and function? Next to nothing, you are apt to confess. And wouldn't it tend to make you more tolerant of law and to increase your respect for it to know just why law is and what it aims to accomplish for society? In the matter of community development how few are the people who see what is to be done for the improvement of their town and know how to go about it! The local school could, in large part, nullify this unhappy state of affairs and is in the position to inspire the idealism of youth to take up such work with hearty enthusiasm.

If there is one outstanding need of the whole of America today, it is the inculcation of tolerance in the hearts and minds of the young. The open-minded person is becoming more rare, rather than more common. The schools fail miserably in encouraging their

pupils to think clearly and to arrive at independent conclusions. Everywhere prejudice grows rampant. We have the Ku Klux Klan riding forth in mask and nightie to work its diabolical will unmolested in many sections. We have church members hooting at the idea that members of other denominations are equally as eligible for admittance to the heavenly abode. In the arena of politics we have Democrats vowing that Republicans are devoid of any semblance of merit, and vice versa, and the two readily uniting in utter condemnation of anything that smacks of socialism.

So it goes. For each of the neglected subjects mentioned here a good case can be made out. Each you must needs vote important, aye, essential, if you would have the schools really prepare the youth of the land for lives of happiness and good citizenship. And such a preparation for life should be the heritage of every child in America—could be, if the adult population once willed it thus.

Teach the child how to live and how to think for himself—these are the important things. Get the good work in, as much as possible, before he leaves the graded school to go out into the world on his own (which the majority do), otherwise he is almost certain to miss the best that life can give and to blunder here and there when he could just as well be progressing. "Look after the inclusion of the neglected fundamentals in the public school courses," the small town citizenry should cry out. Such a revision of the curricula would help matters immensely for the small town. To be taught how to live happily and upon what to place greatest value would be to see the small town, its favorable points and its possibilities, in a clearer light than is vouchsafed to but few at present.

H. G. Wells, who values education for its power to make life a thing of joy and beauty for the masses, prophesies in a cogent magazine article the coming of the day when the school building will be the community's most

prized and imposing edifice. Today the small town can lay claim to no such evidence of pedagogical appreciation, thanks to the half-hearted way in which the average citizen views the instruction of the young. In the small community, especially, the adult looks upon the educational institution as something concerning children largely, parents to a much less degree and others little or not at all. And yet the schoolhouse could just as well be considered the most likely place in the town for public gatherings of a general nature. In many a community such a non-partisan assembly center is needed. In some of the states the rural districts report a widespread use of the schoolhouses as community centers, and with surprising success. In many an instance the small town can follow such examples with profit. Once a community determines upon the use of the schoolhouse in this broader way and abandons the old plan of barring fast the door of its most useful building for three or four months each

year, then the citizenry begins to hold in higher esteem its educational advantages and to vision what these advantages can be expected to accomplish when given a fair chance.

Practically without exception, the small town is vitally affected by near-by county and community fairs. These exhibitions have it in their power to be of great usefulness; also, they can quite as readily degenerate into clique affairs or become known as easy marks for the amusement concessionnaire. But let the local educational institutions take an active part in the support of the fairs. At once something in the way of future promise can be held out for the latter. Above all else, the true worth of a fair to a community is contingent upon the interest the educational authorities and the pupils take in it. To a very considerable extent they determine in advance its degree of usefulness.

Under the head of educational needs prominent mention must be made of an accessible

library. Mark the word "accessible." A library in an out-of-the-way part of the town, located on the third floor of a building having no elevator service and open to the public but a few hours for one or two days a week is unworthy of the name, and yet many a small town is putting up with a makeshift of this order. However, it would be hard to find a community which is justified in accepting such as the best that can be done. With the local administration leading the way, making an initial appropriation and the promise of an annual contribution, the move for the establishment of a library in fact as well as in name can be taken up with confidence by interested citizens and subscriptions of money and books solicited. To begin with, one or two centrally located rooms will suffice. If as many as three or four rooms are to be had, a reading room and a game room for boys and young men can be operated in connection with this library, if these social helps have not already been provided.

As to the expense of operating the small town library, this is largely what the citizenry choose to make it. Sometimes the expense of management is very little, as when well-wishing friends give freely of their time to this constructive work.

Reading worth-while books is largely a matter of habit. It is something that one can easily neglect, especially in a community which possesses no accessible library. Undoubtedly, one of the more pressing needs of the small town of America today is a centrally located library, open to the general public several hours every day, not excepting Sundays.

That there are certain educational needs of the small town which all too often receive scant attention, has just been shown. Similarly, there are religious needs of a general nature and more or less common to the small town which are either overlooked or ignored by many of the citizens. What these needs are will now be set forth.

If there is anything the small town is surfeited with it is churches. Where two or three houses of worship would be ample, there you are apt to find a minimum of at least five or six. Where four or five would more than take care of the average combined attendance, you are likely to find nine or ten. One thing certain, there is no need for more churches in the average small community. Nevertheless, there is an outstanding religious need.

The greatest indictment that can be brought against the pastors and the church-going people of the small town is that they fail to work in unison against the forces of evil. Why, in the name of the one true God they all profess to worship, should not the allies in the great battle for right conduct combine their efforts rather than give their energies to sporadic denominational sallies? This question is not intended as introductory to a proposal or suggestion for the establishment of one big union church where each

denomination would have to renounce certain tenets to permit amalgamation, as ideal (though, unfortunately, not yet practical) as such a consummation would be. But it is to ask on what spiritual teachings, or man-made, common-sense reasoning do the various religious bodies justify their policy of non-participation where the plan for any particular religious work happens not to have originated with their own sect?

To make a member of any church eager to join hands with members of other denominations or faiths, is it not enough to know that the members of these other religious organizations can be just as sincere in their individual beliefs as one is in his own? What more can be asked of any man than that he be true to the Light as the Light has been revealed to him? The seeker after divine grace—in the small town, in the big city—everywhere—should see in the Church a composite institution, each sect, each denomination, working for the one Ultimate Cause,

even though holding to certain doctrinal points which differentiate yet, after all, do not divide.

And suppose there are some in the community who profess no church allegiance. Are these to be looked upon askance just because of that? Are they to be regarded as so many black sheep by the members of the different denominations and chided or held aloof from? Aloofness takes the cake as a breeder of animosity. On the other hand, to censure a man or woman for lack of religious faith or allegiance is but to make the victim of your onslaught despise you. Paradoxical as it may seem to some, one of the religious needs of a great many small towns is that the church members forego the tempting role of passing judgment on the fellow who, for one reason or another, has joined no church and who attends no church. How silly it is for a church member to look down upon such a citizen with that I-feel-sorry-for-

you air or show impatience with what he or she terms the "heathenish" stand!

Most small towns have a so-called ministerial union. Few, indeed, can boast of having their ministers banded in a body that favors cooperative work to the extent of engaging in it. A bona-fide ministerial union is to be numbered among the important needs of the average small community—a union of the various pastors (and through these of their congregations) which lends encouragement to all that is good and which will, in an equally vigorous manner, denounce all such as is deleterious. No small town is inalienably bad. You cannot point out a single one which stands in need of a great religious upheaval or revival every little while—the old-fashioned, highly recommended cure-all which somehow never measured up to the advance advertising. A true union of the forces for good, with the leaders setting the right sort of example in cooperation, can accomplish infinitely more for spiritual ad-

vancement than the most strenuously repeated efforts of the individual sects acting independently.

As an example, take a small town which is sadly lacking in social facilities for its boys and young men. Here, surely, is work waiting to be done that should prick the conscience of any ministerial union which is not asleep at the switch. Exhorting the young idea twice on Sundays and at mid-week prayer meetings to follow in the way of moral rectitude is all very well. But it is not enough. Young people, superabundantly energetic when in normal health, will have recreation. They will devise it for themselves, often of a disastrous nature, if their elders fail in this critical particular. How is this problem coped with by the average ministerial union? You know. The union does nothing because it knows not cooperation. But your exceptional, thorough-going union accepts the challenge. Each congregation of the community is appealed to through its leader to

help better matters. The several churches, which, in the aggregate, are contributing thousands of dollars annually for foreign missions, decide that they can, yes, must, also provide suitable recreational facilities for the local youth. Soon a Y. M. C. A. or similar institution (it may be quite unpretentious at first) is established. Instantly the atmosphere clears. The ministerial union has proved itself a worthy organization of co-operative leaders, and a grateful citizenry values it accordingly.

What is the true measure of the community's educational facilities? What is being accomplished for the enlightenment of the children and the grown-ups, too? Are the various religious bodies working in unison to overcome the forces of evil? These three questions the American small town may well take the time to ask itself. To the extent these can be answered satisfactorily, to that degree is the town building for the advancement of its educational and religious life.

Every community may well cast a hopeful eye to the coming of the day when the local school building will be its most imposing and highly prized edifice. Then the schools will be adequately supported; results expected, exacted, obtained that are simply out of the question with today's personnel and equipment. An accessible public library is a critical need of many, and within the reach of practically every small town. Religiously, the greatest lack is in the failure of the various sects to work together for the triumph of right, when cooperative effort is the one way in which reason tells us the work can be done.

V

SOME SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL DEFICIENCIES

MANY years ago it was propounded by some sage that the twenty-four hours of the day are best utilized when eight are given to work, eight to sleep and eight to recreation. The formula has never been improved upon. There is no abiding happiness and rarely a good living without work; denied the proper amount of sleep one's health becomes impaired; deprived of wholesome recreation we grow stale—true in the case of the young, the middle-aged and even with the elderly. Depending upon the grade and extent of a town's social and recreational facilities, its citizens are accustomed to entering upon their daily tasks with a vim, or go about their several jobs in a I-just-have-to-do-it spirit.

Nowadays, in spite of what used to go, the average person demands some form of diversion almost daily. It is not the place here to debate what this tendency may be heading to (or what, mayhap, it has already led to); whether it should be combated or encouraged. The fact of the need existing seems to go undisputed. For proof, in part, note the constantly increasing exodus of our young people of the small town and country district to the large city.

No longer does the average John and Mary remain contentedly at home of an evening. Those few that remain cannot be said to do so of their own free will. One by one, sometimes by two and threes, the big city's lure of entertainment and daily enjoyment of spare time draws them. True, a better opportunity to secure employment at certain seasons in the larger cities is a factor of no little importance in determining many a boy and girl to leave the home town, but by far the greatest attraction is the promise of

better social facilities. It is exceedingly well in order for the small town to ask itself, "What effort is being made to hold our young people, those we have nurtured and trained and had hoped to retain in our midst?"

Improvement in the social facilities of a small town never "just happen." Thought and action must precede the development of that (as well as of every other) phase of community life. If the citizens of the small towns of America—present and to come—are to enjoy the wholesome social and recreational facilities which they have a right to enjoy, the needs in these particulars must first be recognized and then it must be seen to that these needs are adequately met.

What in the way of social and recreational assets do we find in the typical small town? Something similar to this assortment: One or more modest moving picture houses (in many of the smaller places open not more than three or four nights a week); a billiard room (with its debilitating influences upon

youth); an occasional subscription dance; every now and then a school, church or lodge social or entertainment or a pocket-size edition of a third-rate road show; a small circus or so and several baseball games during the summer months. In some of the more progressive communities this list is augmented by a small Y. M. C. A., or a reading and game room for boys; a fledging Boy Scout troop or two and, rarely, by a good amateur band or orchestra. Few indeed are the small towns that can boast an active dramatic club. And yet in practically every municipality there is ample histrionic talent at hand to stage occasional plays. Too, the citizenry can be counted upon as awaiting eagerly the opportunity to support good shows put on by local players.

To many, the moving picture is a favorite means of entertainment. No community does well to ignore or overlook this fact. Good pictures will be shown where a sufficient number of patrons demand them. The small

town citizen, as a rule, is too prone to accept what is put before him and, if he happens to dislike or disapprove of it, to do his grumbling after he gets home. And how many small towns (cities, also, as far as that goes) do you suppose are urging and encouraging the showing of pictures planned for the juvenile mind at least one day a week in every theater? Seldom, indeed, does one find a general-run picture that is not "over the heads" of or subject to misinterpretation by boys and girls younger than, say, 15 or 16 years. Who will challenge the statement that a child needs a picture adapted to the viewpoint and understanding of the child-mind far more so than he needs books answering to such requirements?

From the viewpoint of a town's future perhaps there is no social and recreational need quite so important as a worthy Young Men's Christian Association or similar institution. The worrisome problem of how to provide for the proper utilization of the boy's

spare time is solved, in very large measure, when you give him a membership in the local "Y."

Love of the outdoors and wholesome living are made doubly attractive to small youth by the Boy Scout movement, and every community should strive to maintain one or more local troops. The Boy Scout idea—where the militant phase is not allowed to become predominant—affords unequaled means for the small boy to gratify his spirit of gregariousness without forming numerous bad habits all the while. Organization and direction of the work in any locality must be in competent hands. Often it waits upon the initiative of an enterprising young minister of the Gospel, one who interests himself in the bodily and mental as well as the spiritual growth of the coming men of the community.

In the case of the young girls, there is no such crying need for improved social and recreational facilities in the small town as urge a Y. M. C. A. and Boy Scout troops for

their brothers. The small town will do well to provide a Y. M. C. A. before a Y. W. C. A., and interest itself in the Boy Scout movement before talking about Girl Scouts; but once having taken care of the boys it becomes any community to plan similarly for the young girls.

Among the least expensive and yet most important of the recreational needs of the small town is a municipal playground that is properly supervised and kept open to the public twelve months of the year. In many cases the playground used by the school requires but a limited amount of new equipment to recommend it favorably for general municipal use and, if kept open during the summer months, would solve this community problem. It is quite easy, it seems, to overlook the fact that little tots and children of the elementary grades, particularly, need exercise and group play during the vacation days just the same as during the seven, eight or nine months of schooling each year.

So much for the children's play. Taking up some phases of recreation for the adults, one may ask, "How about an annual chautauqua? Is the chautauqua to be placed in the category of the desirable?" Many a small town is infested at certain seasons of the year with slick talkers who employ all the wiles of persuasion and "go-getter" salesmanship to inveigle a number of guarantors into signing up for their particular series of lectures and entertainments. Splendid co-operation in advertising and ticket-selling is promised. But lo, the opening day of the GREAT chautauqua rolls around with the guarantors holding three or four times as many tickets as they and their families can use; and the reader knows who pays. The point to be stressed, however, is not that certain citizens generally get taxed abnormally heavily for their public-spiritedness but that the chautauqua of today, in large measure, is not deserving of support, so wholeheartedly is it given over to commercial-

ism. This applies especially to the bulk of the companies that prey year after year upon the smaller of the small, unsuspecting communities. Excellent chautauqua programs are getting to be a rarity. As a rule, the less the small town has to do with the chautauqua, the better off it will be in the long run.

Frequent baseball games; weekly band concerts (in the open when permissible) for which it is ofttimes advisable to make a small admission charge to help defray expenses; a day set apart annually for athletic games; a carefully planned home-coming week about every five years; a community sing on Christmas eve—these are among the social and recreational events the small town's administration and its citizens will do well to foster and support.

Baseball is universally esteemed a manly sport, affording splendid exercise for the participants in the game and enjoyable diversion for the onlookers. But a ball team, to be a

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ball team of any degree of merit, requires financial support in excess of the gate receipts. This is where the business men of the small town are afforded opportunity to further clean sport, provide recreational facilities for all and sundry and help advance the prestige and popularity of their community. To contribute to the support of a properly managed local ball team is to serve one's town in a commendable manner—especially praiseworthy where the community is quite limited in population. A good ball team engenders pride in one's community and stimulates that type of enthusiasm for a town which is capable of working wonders.

A good band or orchestra for the average small town is, in no sense of the word, an impossibility. First, some individual or group must lead the way by organizing a musical body. But starting a band, for instance, is not all—nor even the half of it. To survive, the small town band, in most cases, requires municipal assistance. The town hall or coun-

cil chamber is none too sacrosanct to be proffered as a practice place. Furthermore, the town authorities can, and usually do, spend some of the taxpayers' money for things less worthy than a share in a local band's upkeep expenses. After all, a band in a small town, once the organization gets to the point of being able to perform creditably, becomes a semi-public institution. It is fitting, therefore, that the citizenry recognize this in advance and encourage the band as opportunity affords.

To enable the children to grow to better manhood and womanhood; to induce a greater number of the young folks to remain in the home community; to make life more pleasant for all its citizens—the small town needs to provide more and better social and recreational facilities. The widespread lack of such facilities has been for years and is today one of the major reasons why so few bright, ambitious young people elect to remain in the small town, where, as a rule,

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their lives could be spent to greatest ultimate advantage to self and Nation. And this is the greatest small town problem of them all.

VI

SOME MISCELLANEOUS NEEDS: CONCLUSION

AT the close of each of the preceding chapters a brief summary of the chapter contents was given. Therefore, no further recapitulation of the chief needs of the small town is undertaken. But since there are a few miscellaneous needs meriting consideration, it is to discuss these that this concluding chapter is written.

It may have seemed strange to the small town civic worker reading this treatise for the first time that the urgent need of many a community for a civic league or town improvement society was not mentioned in Chapter I. The omission was intentional. To have taken up this particular need right at the outset would very likely have prejudiced a number of the less interested readers

against the inquiry. Some there are who would have put down the book with a remark like this: "If this thing is to advocate those impractical, petticoat civic leagues, then I'm through reading it!" Now, however, that such a danger is past the case for the civic league or local improvement society can be taken up without apprehension.

The impression obtaining in many a small town relative to a local improvement body is an unfavorable one. Only a limited number of the citizens have manifested interest in the organization, granting such exists. It is looked upon as something that a group of busybody women-folk can amuse themselves with, but not for your stalwart, thorough-going men. It is not regarded as work that every citizen should engage actively in. And when but little is accomplished, all too often the idea is held to blame. Better no local civic league or improvement society than for the townspeople to misconstrue its true function and to fail to see that its serviceableness

is dependent upon well-nigh every citizen participating—men and women and the young people—all showing an interest in the betterment of the community.

On the other hand, there are small towns where the civic league or local improvement society idea has made good in a big way. The people—not just a few leaders or busybodies—have taken hold. They have attended meetings, formulated and carried out campaigns for the beautification and sanitation and all-round betterment of the town they are proud to call home. And these towns show it. It's all a question of getting the run of the citizenry to back up the idea—their one opportunity to take a practical hand in the steady, day-by-day advancement of certain phases of the community life. And, once again, it is the leaders in the small town, the men especially, who must point the way.

Then, too, the subject of community improvement recommends itself as a high school study, affording fascinating work for

the civics class students especially. A distinct need of the day is more active junior civic leagues and improvement societies, drawing their membership principally from the high school boys and girls. Betterment of the individual small town can be advanced in no more tangible way than by the establishment and maintenance of an organization of this type in the high school. Will small town leaders continue to overlook this golden opportunity to gain new and enthusiastic recruits each year for community improvement work?

Another of the miscellaneous needs, and the last to be taken up, is some means whereby the experiences and worth-while achievements of the small towns of America can be made accessible to each other. A place of 3,000 inhabitants in Florida may hit upon a method of establishing a public library that is really unique. What chance is there now of the towns in Maine or Kansas or Oregon learning of this method? Or a little town in

Texas may work out a playground scheme that is ideal for the community of 1,000 to 2,000 souls and not possessed of a wealthy benefactor. How are the small towns in Indiana and Virginia and Colorado to become acquainted with the very playground idea they are so badly needing?

Once the dissemination of information of particular interest to small towns becomes established as a regular service, national in scope and inexpensive to the individual subscriber, and the average citizen knows where to turn to learn of helpful ideas in community advancement, the progress of the small town will be greatly accelerated. May that day be near at hand, and may the small town, favored to a greater extent than is generally realized, soon awake to its pressing needs, set to work to solve them and thus begin to play that great role in the life of the Nation that destiny has decreed for it!

THE END

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